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STATUS OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Symposium on Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in decision 2/2, adopted at its second session, noted the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in preparation for the Summit, including, inter alia, the organization of symposia, seminars and workshops on issues of direct relevance to the Summit. The Preparatory Committee also encouraged the United Nations, the United Nations system, Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and institutes to continue their initiatives to support the preparation for the Summit, including seminars, workshops and symposia.

2. The Symposium on Social Development was organized by China's Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Secretariat for the World Summit for Social Development. It took place in Beijing, from 7 to 9 October 1994, at the invitation of the Government of the People's Republic of China. The Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the Government of China for hosting the Symposium. The report of the Symposium, prepared by the Secretariat, is annexed to the present note.

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Annex

Symposium on Social Development

Beijing, China, 7-9 October 1994

I. The concept of social development and its relation with economic development

1. *Social development emerged, as a concept and as a policy, in the context of the distinction between developed and developing countries.*

(a) As long as societies have existed, individuals have attempted to modify and improve them, either gradually or through radical intellectual and ideological revolutions. The Confucian idea of "great harmony", to be achieved through moral perfection, benevolence and respect for nature and the universe, is both an individual pursuit and a project for a good society. From Thomas More to Fourier, Bakunin and Owen, moral philosophers constructed ideal societies and utopias on the basis of a denunciation of the injustices they observed. Fraternity of the deprived and ultimately of all human beings was the central dream of the visions of social change and social progress.

(b) After the second World War, in the wake of the decolonization movement, the newly independent countries embarked on a process of development conceived as an expansion and diversification of economic activities, a rise in levels of living measured in terms of material welfare and the provision of essential public services, notably for health and education. Different theories and strategies for development were elaborated. They all had in common the preeminence of the need for economic growth, a central role of the State and public authorities, and the call for international assistance and cooperation. In countries undertaking economic and social transformation, social progress was both a set of precise goals and the mobilization of all segments of society towards such goals; the participation of all in the productive process was a critical ingredient in the pursuit of equality and prosperity. In the industrialized countries with a mixed or market economy, social affairs and social issues referred to the relations between workers and employers, to social security and to various forms of social welfare and social allowances. Health, education, housing were sectors in themselves and not consistently labelled as social. In fact, the concept of social development was not widely used, neither as a policy framework, nor as a tool for organizing ministries and public services. Overall, during those decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, social development was either an addition of social sectors, or a complement, albeit on the weak side, of economic development.

2. *At this point of human history, an ambitious and comprehensive vision of social development is required.*

(a) Social development, as a philosophy of man and society, should mean the development of all individuals in terms of dignity, knowledge, virtue, compassion and creativity, the progress of society in its capacity to ensure security, peace, production and exchange, and respect for basic rights and freedom, and the development of harmonious relations between individuals, communities and their physical environment. In that sense social development should be social progress and should become again a mobilizing philosophy or utopia.

(b) Social development, as a concept for political action, should be both a set of policies and the main dimension of all policies at all levels of decision, be it international, regional, national or local. Direct policies for social development pertain to the traditional social sectors - education, health, housing, social security, protection of children and families, assistance to those who are unemployed or fall into poverty - to questions of distribution of goods, services and opportunities, to issues of violence and intolerance, and to requirements for the participation of individuals, groups and communities in the political process. The policies which should integrate the need for social development as a core dimension and a central exigency include all policies for economic growth and development, all financial and fiscal policies, and all measures affecting the security of individuals and communities. Such a broad concept of social development is particularly relevant for the Social Summit.

(c) Social development, as a process, implies:

- the participation and efforts of all individuals; there is a harmonious relation and a continuum between the pursuit of happiness, self-realization, and the welfare of society, or common good, through a culture of respect for other human beings and the universe, fraternity and responsibility; neither the blind pursuit of self-interest, nor an imposed mobilization for the collective interest, are compatible with social development;

- the development and good functioning of an active network of institutions - from local community organizations to the State apparatus - through which individuals, groups and other social actors interact in a large variety of ways and with cultural and legal codes of behaviour and rules of the game which are understood and respected by all; institutional development, including the institution of the market, is a key to social development, and, together with cultural development, a criteria for assessing its quality and durability;

- constant reference by the main actors - notably the public authorities but also the media, private enterprises and other institutions of society - to the central objectives of social development; any society requires a sense of direction, blended with a feeling of security and stability; at the same time, social development implies moderation and the realization that there is no perfect society, that failures are a source of learning and improvement and that there are many paths to human progress and social harmony.

3. *This comprehensive vision of social development is made necessary by the current features of the process of modernization.*

The current process of growing interdependence between economies and societies at the world level is a major phenomenon of our time. More exchange, more trade, more communications between individuals and nations are positive trends. This evolution needs, however, to be informed, shaped, inspired and sometimes controlled by a vision of social development at the world level which would aim at:

(a) maintaining and developing a variety of cultures, philosophies, religions and ways of being and thinking;

(b) promoting universal values of human dignity, freedom, tolerance, solidarity and respect for fellow human beings;

(c) placing the concept of sustainability at the centre of all human actions and policies; this concept, born from the damage inflicted on our world by a predatory and careless productivist culture, ought to be rooted in values of responsibility vis-à-vis humankind and future generations;

(d) addressing global threats and problems such as pollution, organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, violence, epidemics, and physical or cultural aggression against the dignity of the human person, through increased cooperation at all levels and through the mobilization of financial resources;

(e) ensuring that the power to influence events and the power to control the various forms of the process of globalization and interdependence are distributed as widely as possible, and is exercised with an acute sense of humility and responsibility vis-à-vis the common good of humankind;

(f) fostering international cooperation in all its forms, including for exchange of views and experience and learning from successes and failures, and encouraging research and the development of scientific attitudes and spirit.

4. *Social development requires economic growth.*

Economic growth is the result of initiative and investment and a goal of most contemporary societies. It should be considered as a means of advancing human welfare and should be shaped and guided by a comprehensive vision of social development. In order to place the economy at the service of human needs and social goals, all economic, financial and fiscal policies, including on investments, taxation, wages and employment, ought to be informed by social considerations and social goals. This has rarely been the case in recent decades. Culturally, institutionally and politically, economic growth and an economic type of rationality in the culture of decision makers have dominated the world scene and the spirit of the time during the second part of the twentieth century. One of the major intellectual and political challenges for the World Social Summit is to reconcile economic growth with the values, principles and objectives of social development.

5. *Social development encompasses the concept of human development.*

The concept of human development has been elaborated recently in a context of strong emphasis on the virtues and efficiency of open and dynamic markets, a realization of the critical role of cultures, attitudes, and knowledge and training in the process of development, and a sombre diagnosis of the persistence of poverty and social misery and tensions in certain parts of the world. Human development places emphasis on human beings as both the object of the development effort and the agents of development. It represents a shift from a commodity-centred strategy of development to a people centred strategy. Its objective is to fulfil the potential of people by enlarging their capabilities and their participation in their own development. The enhancement of human capabilities and opportunities, not the enlargement of GNP, should be the ultimate objective of development policy. Within an economic rationality and language, a human development strategy places emphasis on human capital formation; recognizes that investment in human capital can economize on the use of physical capital and the exploitation of natural resources; suggests that the benefits from investing in people are in general more evenly spread than the benefits from investing in physical and natural capital; and stresses the complementarities among the various types of human capital expenditure, for example primary health care, nutrition and the ability of children to learn, or health of women, their education, and life expectancy. A human development approach emphasizes the positive linkages between various social and economic policies.

II. Methods of measuring social development

6. *Data, indicators and studies and knowledge of living conditions and various aspects of the functioning of society, are indispensable for information and decision-making, for the setting of targets and the monitoring of objectives, and for the forecasting of social and cultural changes.*

(a) The development of social statistics and indicators reflects a greater interest in questions of social development and a realization that economic data do not apprehend the full reality of social relations and social trends.

(b) In several parts of the world, there is a long tradition of statistical development and social reporting. There is sometimes a wealth of data which complicate their interpretation. In other countries and regions, there is a dearth of reliable information on the basic aspects of social questions.

(c) In countries and regions where basic data are missing or of poor quality, innovative techniques which are often less costly than traditional methods such as censuses, should be encouraged; they include the use of observation posts and of simplified questionnaires, of proxies and even of "travelling social development assessors"; such non-conventional methods of data collection can be particularly useful to apprehend social development trends and problems at the level of households. There are also methods,

ways of thinking and attitudes which are required to correct the limitations of macroeconomic data.

(d) A number of efforts have been made to develop indexes, such as the human development index or the social progress index, aiming at capturing the main aspects of social trends and problems; technical issues related to the level of aggregation of data, to the question of distribution, and to other adjustments notably to gender, have political connotations and ought to be solved in an ad hoc manner; indexes are particularly useful for comparison over time either at the national, regional or subregional levels.

7. *Exchange of views on the various aspects of the development and use of data, indicators and indexes are useful at the international level and among specialists.*

(a) A proper assessment, understanding and monitoring of the core issues of the Social Summit and of the comprehensive approach to social development required by contemporary societies, call for further effort by the international community to develop adequate and usable data and indicators.

(b) A dialogue between statisticians, researchers and policy makers is indispensable. In the context of the Social Summit, policy makers and researchers should develop their understanding of the decisions agreed on, of the contours of current social concern, and of the objectives and targets adopted. Apparently straightforward data such as the ratio of active to inactive persons in a given country require careful interpretation from social scientists and researchers.

(c) International organizations should enhance their efforts to facilitate exchanges among experts, to foster the dialogue between researchers and policy-makers and to act as "moderators" for productive use of data and aggregated indicators.

8. *Statistics, indicators and indexes capture only part of social reality, must be interpreted with care and must be complemented by studies in various disciplines.*

(a) Statistics, indicators and indexes are developed in response to demands from societies and their governments, always with a time lag and always in an imperfect manner; policy makers should never forget that indicators are only proxies and should not use them as objectives. At present, much progress is, for instance, required for data on the environment.

(b) In some cases, detailed statistics and indicators on social problems and reports based on such data become part of the political debate and acquire a strong visibility for ordinary citizens through the press and other media. Such visibility can facilitate the tasks of governments, for instance to redress regional imbalances or to address specific inequalities within the population; at the same time, care must be taken not to over

emphasize the significance of data which always remain partial; social indicators are policy tools, sometimes for forecasting and early warning; they should not, however, be a substitute for policy-making based on the participation of citizens and groups involved in the process of social development.

(c) Indicators can reveal the state of a society; it could be argued, for instance, that indicators of the situation of disabled people reveal the quality of a society by expressing the attention given to its weakest members. It has also been said that indicators of the situation of women express the true level of social development of a society. The same is true of statistics and indicators on the situation and level of participation of the poorest groups. The development and use of such indicators suggesting the quality of social development should not be confused with the development of statistics which are essentially instruments for a better understanding of social trends and problems.

(d) The choice at the international and national levels of particular data and indicators to characterize the state of social development implies compromises between the need for universality and comparisons, and the need to reflect the uniqueness of national and local circumstance and cultures; science, including statistical techniques, both reflects and shapes social reality.

(e) The collection and interpretation of data and indicators is not a substitute for studies, research and the elaboration of sociological and philosophical theories on the functioning of societies; at a time of great emphasis on quantitative approaches, the need for sociological studies should be emphasized; recommendations from the World Summit for Social Development should include the further development and appropriate use of data and indicators at all levels of information and decision making, in the context of the development of social sciences to acquire a better understanding of social problems and aspirations; theoretical and empirical research on social development is both a political and intellectual pursuit.

III. Strategies for alleviating poverty and protecting the environment

9. *Poverty is a universal problem affecting individuals and groups in all societies.*

(a) Recently, there has been an increase in both the number and proportion of poor people in Africa and Latin America as well as in the former Soviet Union, and pockets of poverty have also reappeared in industrialized countries. In spite of considerable progress during the last decade, Asia still has the largest number of people in poverty. In China, for example, it is estimated that 80 million people are below the poverty line. This represents very significant progress achieved during two decades of high economic growth and a spectacular increase in average per capita income. Poverty in China now represents important, and apparently rising, regional

differences. There is a concentration of poor people in the arid and mountainous regions of the west, northwest and southwest. There are also poor people in and around the major cities. There is also, in China as in other countries undertaking rapid economic changes, a "floating" population estimated at around 70 million. These people have been displaced by social and economic changes in their regions of origin and, mostly, are in search of economic opportunities.

(b) Poverty is strongly related to unemployment and underemployment. While a very large number of jobs are being created in regions and countries experiencing a rapid rate of economic growth - particularly in small industries and in the service sector - there is still an important "labour force surplus" in most developing countries. Even when demographic growth has been curbed, there is often an excess of labour capacity in agriculture and in the traditional industrial sector. These people are officially unemployed and, more commonly, underemployed. When the economy grows they have a chance to find a livelihood. When public services and public assistance are well developed, they are poor but not destitute. In the absence of both growth and a network of protective services, poverty becomes a dominant feature of society.

10. *There are various ways of defining poverty and assessing its prevalence.*

(a) Poverty can be seen as a condition of basic deprivation. Undernourishment, ill health, illiteracy and insecurity are forms of deprivation. The manner in which a person experiences a particular deprivation, for instance hunger, depends partly on the characteristics of this person - age, gender, physical fitness - and partly on his or her ability to acquire or receive the commodities - food, clean water, - that help address the problem.

(b) The concepts of absolute and relative poverty remain valid. Relative poverty will, by definition, always exist. In a society with a high level of affluence, and perceived as such by all its members, relative poverty could become "relative affluence", but the notion of difference, or inequality, would remain. Within the current way of thinking, it is impossible to imagine a society with perfect equality, not only of income, but also of other attributes of welfare. Absolute poverty, or deprivation from an essential element of well being, has also graduations. There is the poverty that endangers one's life, the poverty that affects one's health, and the poverty that creates a permanent feeling of insecurity. In the context of the World Summit for Social Development, while the goal of mankind should be the eradication of poverty, governments might be invited to address first, and with precise national and/or regional targets, the question of extreme poverty or deprivation.

(c) A narrow conception of poverty confines itself to income or consumption of households or individuals. A broad conception of poverty refers to level of nourishment, incidence of mortality and morbidity, level of education, absence of various forms of discrimination, and other aspects of what is commonly considered in the world as a decent way of living. There is no perfect correlation between trends or levels of poverty

measured in the narrow manner and trends and levels of poverty in the larger sense. Everywhere in the world, there are people who have an adequate level of nourishment while suffering from lack of basic amenities and services.

(d) Poverty lines and statistics on the number of people in absolute and relative poverty, cannot capture the economic, social, and cultural context in which poor people find themselves, nor the manner in which they experience their condition. Questions of self-esteem and hope are of particular importance. A "passage" through deprivation, with clear prospect for a solution, has a totally different meaning for an individual or a family than a "situation" of poverty, with months and years of accumulated grief and despair. This is also why an "atmosphere" of economic dynamism and growth is of such great importance. Apart from the direct creation of employment opportunities, it helps prevent feelings of alienation stemming from material poverty.

11. *Poverty is not only material, but also moral and spiritual.*

In line with a broad approach to the problem of poverty, it should be emphasized that a number of social ills such as crime, drug addiction and the spread of communicable diseases, are strongly related to various forms of material and spiritual poverty and deprivation. In the same vein, a lessening of moral values and traditions often lead to the spreading of corrupt practices which impair efforts at reducing poverty and at improving the overall social harmony of a society. Still in the same vein, the importance of the family, both as a protection against poverty and as a primary beneficiary of anti-poverty policies, ought to be recognized. Poverty is often the result of a severance of the link of an individual with his or her family. This suggests also the need for a careful assessment of the reasons for poverty which may be individual, circumstantial or structural.

12. *Throughout the world, women are the primary victims of material deprivation.*

There is very strong empirical evidence and theoretical justification for a gender approach to poverty alleviation. Cross-cultural investigations have in recent years led to a better understanding of the relationship between gender and poverty. Poverty is the outcome of structural inequalities in entitlement to resources, and the weight of poverty falls more heavily on certain social groups, particularly women. An example of the particular plight of women is the difficult situation of young migrant women moving out of their villages in search of economic opportunities. This phenomenon is prevalent in countries undergoing rapid economic changes. Also, older women remaining in villages often suffer a decline in their status and living conditions. This gender approach calls for refinements in the definition of poverty and for diversified policies able to address the problem as a whole as well as the specific difficulties of women.

13. *Poverty alleviation requires a wide range of policies.*

(a) There are two means of acquiring the essential commodities and services that help a person to escape deprivation: private income and public services; this broad distinction should be kept in mind when designing and assessing policies for poverty alleviation; progress on one front - more private income through the opening of markets and growth - does not automatically lead to progress on the other front; in fact, in societies experiencing rapid structural and economic changes, a growing number of people are often deprived of basic public services and amenities, such as health and education. Balanced attitudes, policies and philosophies of what constitute a harmonious society are fundamental requirements for social development.

(b) Policies for poverty alleviation fall into four broad categories:

- direct provision by the government of goods and services, notably food, clothing, health care and education;

- widening of opportunities for livelihood for poor households through such measures as land redistribution, or distribution of assets and capital, or investments in infrastructure and grants or loans for agricultural development;

- employment generation or public works programmes; in relation to the question of surplus labour mentioned above, and in order to avoid massive migrations to urban areas as well as to alleviate poverty, concerted programmes of employment generation through public works schemes are of particular importance in China as well as other countries;

- increasing the incomes of households through price policies, price subsidies and higher purchasing prices for local products.

(c) The proper balance between these various policies must vary with local circumstances and with the overall strategies pursued at a particular time by a particular country. The success of poverty alleviation policies appears to be closely dependent, however, on the following factors:

- good administrative capabilities; poor areas often have poor local administration, and special efforts need to be made to develop the skills, sense of public service and integrity of local administrators and representatives of public authorities;

- sufficient financial resources; the financing of poverty alleviation schemes generally stems from taxes or other forms of government revenue, insurance schemes and partial payment by the users and beneficiaries; overall, public resources through taxes, both national or federal and local, ought to provide the bulk of the financing of anti-poverty schemes; this does not mean, obviously, that economic growth and a dynamic market are not essential ingredients of a strategy to lift levels of living of the population as a whole;

- positive impact of anti-poverty measures on initiative and economic growth; apart from the overall political and cultural atmosphere which largely determines and is influenced by the attitude of the public and the government vis-à-vis various forms of poverty, the direct and indirect effects of anti-poverty schemes on the economy need to be constantly reviewed; this refers to inflation as well as to the effects that, for example, free distribution of food might have on prices and on the income of small producers; public policies and market mechanisms have many complex relations.

14. *Policies for reducing poverty take place in an economic, social, cultural and political context which should shape their features and orientations.*

(a) In countries which are opening the economy to market initiatives and mechanisms, traditional poverty alleviation measures are being revised. Globally, there is a shift from relief to development - sometimes called "empowerment" - in the design of anti-poverty policies. This includes the concern for a proper macroeconomic environment, as well as measures to diversify products and structures in agriculture, the development of local enterprises on the basis of indigenous resources, change in ownership laws and practices, and clarification of property rights. A strong emphasis is placed on an efficient use of poverty alleviation funds, as well as on changes in attitudes of the people concerned to promote an entrepreneurial spirit. Sometimes these policies are labelled as an effort to "commercialize" the traditional economy.

(b) New policies and shifts of emphasis do not necessarily mean that traditional measures become obsolete. In all societies, assistance to the poor remains a necessity, a moral duty and an imperative of solidarity. In China a "Social Relief Law" is being developed for drafting and review in 1995. Five traditional guarantees - food, clothing, medical care, burial services, and education for orphans - are complemented by relief in case of natural disaster and unemployment. Minimal living standards will be established for urban and rural areas. Cooperatives and other forms of association and mutuality are encouraged.

(c) Monitoring, evaluation and continuous assessment of the effects on the groups concerned and on the overall economy and society are imperative features of anti-poverty policies. The results of specific measures, for instance privatization of land which was traditionally used as commons, are often ambiguous. There should be consistency of purpose but flexibility in approach. A group approach, for instance, is not always effective. The demand for change has to come from the individuals, but credit can sometimes be successfully given to small groups. On the other hand, the role of non-governmental organizations and mass organizations such as trade unions can be important in creating a chain reaction for positive change.

15. *Sustainable development and the eradication of poverty are strongly related goals.*

(a) Large numbers of people live in a poor environment and poverty is one of the causes of environmental degradation; the latter can be traced in

particular to availability and choices of technologies. There is a need to focus on the overall question of resources and their distribution between and within households. Strategies are required for protecting, regenerating and monitoring the use of natural resources. Deforestation and desertification remain dramatic global issues, and the disruption of ecological balance leads to a reduced ability to resist natural disasters and to alleviate poverty. Conversely, an improvement of the ecological environment brings social and economic benefits to all. One of the characteristics of poor regions is the absence of appropriate institutional arrangements to protect the environment. In the struggle against environmental degradation, technical, institutional and political issues cannot be separated.

(b) Rapid growth can be highly stressful to the environment and there is a link between environmental degradation and aspirations and patterns of consumption. The environment problem is global in nature and there is a need to lift people out of poverty while finding solutions to environment degradation. At the same time the statement that there is, on our earth "enough for everybody's needs and not enough for everybody's greed" remains absolutely correct. Sustainable development requires the reduction of poverty as well as a redefinition of affluence.

(c) Poverty and rapid population growth leads peoples to "squander" natural resources and destroy the environment; one of the main rationales, in certain regions, for encouraging reduced fertility is the promotion of sustainable patterns of development.

(d) Also, in many parts of the world, a renewed emphasis on rural development is required by the related objectives of reducing poverty, protecting the environment and ensuring a balanced overall social development; strategies to that effect include integrated environmental improvement such as afforestation, soil and water conservation, natural disaster prevention, and economic and fiscal measures to alleviate rural poverty and encourage agricultural development. The decline, at the world level, in the number of people involved in agricultural production - because of gains in productivity - ought not to generate uncontrolled urbanization and unsustainable patterns of development. The reduction of poverty and the protection of the environment require a strong role by governments and an active involvement of non-governmental and other private and public institutions.

(e) In March 1994, the State Council of the People's Republic of China adopted the "China Agenda 21 White Paper on Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century" in accordance with the commitment made by all Member States which participated in the 1992 Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. This strategy will be translated into concrete policies, targets and mobilization of resources for sustainable development, through the ninth five-year plan.

(f) To eradicate extreme poverty and create an economic basis for sustainable development, developing countries require the support of the international community. They often find themselves in a number of vicious

circles. For instance, some are forced to cut forests to export timber and gain foreign exchange. Issues of debt and trade have a very close relationship with the protection of the environment. The world sees a dramatic growth in the number of "environmental refugees", resulting from a deterioration of the ecological environment. Developed countries, given their resources and level of scientific and technological development, have a particular responsibility, bilaterally and through international organizations, to assist weaker partners and to protect the global environment.

IV. The role of Government and community organizations in social development

16. *Social development requires a leading role for Governments at all levels.*

(a) The ultimate responsibility for the well-being of all citizens resides with Government. And, Government is the broadest instrument of collective action that can promote human development and social progress. The Government expresses its role as a policy maker, notably to design strategies for social development, as a legislator, for instance to develop a proper legal system for the operation of the market, as an initiator of reforms, for example on the distribution of power between national, regional and local authorities, and as a provider of financial resources, for public services and the protection of the weakest.

(b) Government social development strategies can be divided into three broad components: the structure of incentives; the composition of public expenditure, and the implementation of structural reforms. In the first category are those policies that concern prices, access to markets, and discrimination against particular social groups, such as women and minorities. Factor markets, such as those for labour, capital and natural capital (land, air, water) are often far from efficient and need Government involvement to improve their functioning. In the second category lie many opportunities for the Government to find resources to promote social development through redistribution measures. In the third category are policies and institutional changes designed to achieve greater equity in the distribution of productive assets, to generate employment for the unemployed, and to provide a greater measure of food security, nutrition and other important social welfare needs of the population.

(c) Adequate, efficient and fair tax systems play an extremely important role in social development. At present, tax systems are generally regressive and ineffective. The bulk of government expenditure, including for the financing of social and other public services, cannot be drawn from indirect taxes. In the context of a comprehensive approach to social development, public expenditures which do not contribute to such development should be reduced to a minimum. Still in general terms, there should a reallocation of expenditures towards public activities which benefit the largest number of people.

(d) In terms of use of public expenditures, there is a long standing debate on the respective merits of selectivity versus universality in the provision of services and benefits. There seems to be a widespread view, at this point of time, that public services and benefits should be targeted on selected beneficiaries. Apart from issues of overall solidarity and social integration, a targeted approach raises a number of problems of feasibility, identification of the targeted groups, and enforcement cost. A mix of universality and selectivity, depending on the nature of the service and on national circumstances, should be encouraged.

(e) Given the decisive role of Government for social development, the overall question of the relations between state and society becomes extremely important. Accountability, transparency of decisions, and integrity of the public service, are crucial determinants of the trust of people for public authorities. Governments should be effective leaders of social development through their overall political discourse and through concrete actions and policies.

17. *Local Government has a key role to play in social development.*

In order to be effective, local authorities must take into account the relationship between society at large, economic factors, technological innovations, and social development. Local authorities ought also to establish precise plans in the context of a clear idea and strategy on the meaning and avenues for social development in the community. All elements of community development and of its amenities, notably infrastructure, transport, and areas for sports and leisure, are relevant to improvements in living conditions.

18. *There is a complementarity between the roles of governments, local authorities, and community organizations.*

(a) Non-governmental organizations are of growing importance in most regions of the world. Sometimes they play a major advocacy role, acting as critic, "conscience", and promoter of new ideas. Sometimes they have clearly identified sectoral purposes. In some countries there are mass organizations which in addition to their participation in the implementation of public policies, play an increasing role in the development of innovative measures and in the representation of the interests of their constituents. Non-governmental and other comparable organizations can be seen as intermediaries between public authorities, private enterprises, and individuals. More and more frequently, they also contribute to the financing of various social services at the local level.

(b) Non-governmental organizations are not substitutes for government responsibility and government action. They are at the service of their constituents and of the community at large. They contribute to the elaboration and implementation of policies that serve the general interest. They have a very special role in the treatment by society of its weakest members. A prominent example is the situation of disabled persons. Non-governmental organizations have made throughout the world, a decisive contribution to the changing of people's attitudes towards disability. The concept of a "society for all" has gained grounds. Non-governmental

organizations are important elements of the political process, and accountability, transparency of decisions and democratic forms of authority, are requirements which also apply to these organizations of society.

(c) Under different forms in different political settings, organizations of citizens at the village level also play an important role for social development. In China, village committees contribute to the provision of social services, the development of local economic activities, and the mediation of disputes. During the recent process of reform, heavy demands were sometimes placed on individuals. Peasants became responsible for inputs to the production process and for technical and welfare services. There was a new distribution of roles between individuals, households, and the collectives. During this process, problems occurred and there is now an effort to find a proper balance between individual and collective responsibilities. In other contexts, there is a comparable movement to find an adequate distribution of roles between governments, the "civil society", and the institutions of the market.

(d) Individuals are part of a variety of social networks, on the basis of residence, occupation, or private interest. Social development policies of all kinds reach them through these networks and community organizations. It is becoming more and more obvious that the maintenance of stable communities, in a global economy, characterized by high mobility of ideas, capital and, increasingly, labour, is one of the great issues of our time. Communities have a very large role to play in social development. They constitute the medium in which the greatest amount of popular participation can occur and where local resources can be made to serve most directly the needs of peoples. The role of communities, in this overall sense, should be part of the agenda of the Social Summit. It has a very strong relationship with social stability as a whole and with the feeling of security that individuals ought to have in order to be able to participate effectively in social development.

(e) At all levels, and from all actors - governments, local authorities, non-governmental and community organizations - the role of training and education is perhaps the most critical in all efforts to promote social development. Education has a technical, and cultural meaning. It is both the enhancement of the capacity of an individual to earn a livelihood, to integrate society, and to contribute to the overall harmony of such society. It cannot be dissociated from the basic human need to acquire knowledge, nor from the basic human responsibility to contribute to overall betterment of the human condition.

Appendix I

Summary of introductory statements

Opening address by Vice Premier Li Langing

The Vice Premier began his address by stating that the world of today is experiencing unprecedented and profound changes. Despite the prospect for peace, contradictions abound. There are still political conflicts in many "new regions" of the world; many countries, especially the least developed countries, are confronted with social problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, diseases and environmental pollution. This poses a great challenge for the world. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the international community must re-examine its thinking and adopt a pragmatic attitude on the global issues of peace and development to promote economic development and social progress.

Mr. Li recalled that prior to the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995) and to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), several conferences dealing with economic and social development had been convened by the United Nations, including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the International Conference on Population and Development. This demonstrates that the international community has already recognized the interdependence of economic and social development; that economic development is a precondition for social development; and that social development is the starting point for economic development. China reaffirms that the main mission of the United Nations is to promote peace, security and development.

The Vice Premier observed that during the part 15 years, China had achieved considerable social progress; this was the best period in the nation's history. China, with 7 per cent of the world's farm land, has managed to feed 22 per cent of the world's population; average life expectancy has now reached 70 years; illiteracy rate of youth has been reduced to 7 per cent; urban unemployment rate is now down to 2-3 per cent; and the number of poor people in China has decreased from 250 million in 1978 to 80 million today.

At the same time, China is fully aware of the many social problems confronting its society. Among them is the tension that exists between economic development, population trends, natural resources and the environment; social structural and regional imbalances; and an inadequate social security system to satisfy the demands posed by a socialist market economy. The major tasks for the Government of China for the years to come will be to tackle and address these problems. China is currently formulating its national strategy and programme on social development for the years 1996-2010. Mr. Li expressed confidence that with hard work by the Government and the people of China, and with the support of the international community, the global target of reaching higher standard of living for the average people, the harmonization of economic and social development and the overall improvement of the society by the twenty-first century will be realized not only for China, but for the whole world.

Finally, Mr. Li pointed out that China, with her long history and cultural traditions, is pursuing its own path to social development. In doing so, China is eager to exchange experiences and extend its cooperation with other nations. Mr. Li pledged that China would do all it could to participate in the many diversified activities of the United Nations and to contribute to the prosperity and progress of humanity.

Statement by Madame Hao Jianxiu, Vice Chairperson, State Planning Commission and Vice Chairperson, China's PrepCom for World Summit for Social Development

Madame Hao stated that the question of social development had captured the attention of the international community; it was therefore most relevant that the Symposium on Social Development was taking place to examine the questions of poverty, the concept of social development and the role of the state in social development. China, a nation with an old heritage, is now the largest developing country in the world. Its concern for the well-being of people is not confined to China, but extends to the world as a whole. The World Summit for Social Development offers a major opportunity for the entire world to look closely at the question of social and human progress; the State Planning Commission of China pledges its full support to the preparatory work for the Summit. Madame Hao informed the group that China's Preparatory Committee for the Summit was established last year. It consists of 25 board members and 30 representatives and has organized the following activities to support the preparation of the Summit:

1. preparation of China's National Report, which was submitted to the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the Social Summit in New York in August 1994; the report describes past achievements and outlines future policies for social development for China;

2. defining the "All China social development programme" and deciding on the national goals, strategies and policy orientation for social development for the next 15 years;

3. convening of a Working Session on National Social Development by the State Council to discuss modification of China's social development policies for the years 1996-2010; this will be the first conference of this type ever held in China;

4. establishment of the Chinese Social Development Association, a non-governmental organization which shall assist the Government in playing an active role in the communities by participating in public services, training social workers, sponsoring international exchange, and promoting research work on social development;

5. holding of an Exhibition (24-30 September 1994) on the Achievements of Social Development in China, on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic;

6. holding of this International Symposium on Social Development (7-9 October 1994), with the hope that it will contribute in a pragmatic manner to the drafting of the final document for the Summit;

7. participating in other preparatory activities of the Summit, such as the Ministerial Meeting on Social Development organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (mid-October 1994).

With regard to the promotion of social integration, which is one of the core issues of the Summit, Madame Hao felt that three sets of relationships would need to be maintained:

- harmony between mankind and nature: there is only one earth and therefore the need to preserve the natural and ecological environment must be observed;

- harmony between mankind and society: by maintaining social stability, by providing every member of society with basic services, and by offering equal opportunities of participation to all;

- harmony between social development and economic growth: economic growth is the foundation for social development; rapid economic growth can, however, lead to social problems and governments must take appropriate corrective actions to promote social progress. In this regard, the participation of non-governmental organizations can be particularly useful.

Finally, Madame Hao appealed to the international community to adopt a pragmatic attitude and a spirit of "togetherness" in discussing the question of social development, so that the Declaration and Programme of Action could be adopted by consensus at the Social Summit.

Statement by Mr. Arthur N. Holcombe, UNDP Resident Representative

Mr. Holcombe welcomed the convening of the Symposium and expressed the hope that the meeting could help in laying foundations for the further strengthening of China's social development policies and programmes, and to enable them to achieve their longer term targets and social objectives.

He referred to the recent visit to China by the Secretary-General who not only pointed out the critical role of international peace-keeping in promoting global security but also the vital importance of sustainable social and economic development. The Secretary-General looks upon the Social Summit as a unique opportunity to turn the world's attention to the gravest challenges to human welfare in the decades ahead, and to mobilize the international and local commitment and resources necessary to address them successfully. The Summit provides the opportunity for governments, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society to focus attention on the critical social issues; to share information, ideas and experience; to frame priority social strategies and goals; and to stimulate national and international cooperation in coping with common problems.

Mr. Holcombe noted the enormous progress which China has achieved with its social development programmes since 1949, particularly since 1978: notably its education-for-all and health-for-all efforts; reduction in the numbers of its absolute poor from 270 million in 1978 to 97 million in 1985 and to 80 million

today; and in the area of population control. However, there is still the continued need to improve social welfare during the transition to a socialist market economy.

Mr. Holcombe pointed out that China was the first country to honour its commitment made at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to prepare a comprehensive national Agenda 21 strategy for sustainable development. In March of 1994, the State Council of China approved its "China Agenda 21 White Paper on Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century". This reflects China's commitment to sustainable development and its pursuit of a balanced strategy for economic and social development.

Finally, the important role of the State Planning Commission in taking the lead at the State Council level with the preparations of the Social Summit must be recognized. The objective is to ensure that China's social development policies and programmes are sustainable, successfully incorporated into development planning, and that implementation occurs at all levels of government and society.

Statement by Mr. Jacques Baudot, Coordinator, World Summit for Social Development

Mr. Baudot recalled the goals of the United Nations Charter which states in its preamble that the peoples of the United Nations are determined "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" and "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples". The Social Summit, with the efforts of all concerned, will be a contribution to this universal goal of economic and social advancement of all peoples.

The Summit will address the problems of poverty, unemployment, lack of social integration or cohesion or social harmony, which have many causes, characteristics and consequences - economic, social, political, cultural and even moral and philosophical - and affect all societies and all nations, in different ways and with a varying intensity. These problems should also be addressed with a sense of urgency, care and responsibility. This Summit is not an ordinary world conference; it should be seen as a step towards the identification of values, ideas and policies that could help define and implement the common good and the common features of the civilizations of the twenty-first century.

Nobody has all the answers to all the problems to our societies and there is no blueprint for a solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment or social disintegration. Through the process of the preparation of the Summit, governments, as well as the other actors - including the private sector - are invited to share views and experiences, to learn from each other and to devise ideas and policies which will both respect the principles and values on which the United Nations is founded and respect national and community orientations, priorities, traditions and cultures. A good division of responsibilities and roles, between the State (including central and local public authorities) and private initiatives (including market forces and mechanisms), would be one of

the domains for this exchange of experiences and learning through mutual respect and openness.

Mr. Baudot remarked that the Summit will proclaim the critical importance of cooperation at all levels including at the international level. The role of the United Nations and of the United Nations system is only part of the overall international cooperation required for addressing problems of social progress and overall development. It should be a supportive role. International organizations are at the service of Member States and their citizens.

Finally, Mr. Baudot noted that the Government of China has been playing a very active and essential role in the preparation of the Summit, through inter alia, the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. He further noted that this active role is rooted in the important work being done at the national level. The organization of this Symposium, and the most generous hospitality provided by the host Government, testified of this interest and contributions of China to the cause of social development.

Appendix II

List of participants

Experts

Bina Agarwal

Rogatien Biaou

Jenny Chadwick

Chen Ji-yuan

Chen San-lin

Elisabeth Goan Croll

Meghnad Jagdishchandra Desai

Fu Xu-shan

Gan Shi-jun

Gou Jian-mo

Guo Cheng-kang

Keith Griffin

S. Athar Hussain

Jiang Li

Jiang de-hua

Jiang Guang-ping

Jiang Jin-he

Kay Y. K. Ku

Jassy B. Kwesiga

Li Qiang

Kiari Liman-Tinguiri

Liu Fu-he

Luo Rong-Qu

Ma Rong

Meng Xian-zhong

Pan Wen-can

J. N. M. Richelle

Carl Riskin

E. L. Samuels

Wang Si-bin

Wang Xin-huai

Wu Huan-guang

Wu Wei

Wu Jun

Yang Yu-ying

Ye Ru-qiu

Zheng Hang Sheng

Zheng Xin-li

Zhu Chuan-yi

Zhu Qing-fang

Zhu Wen

United Nations system

Jacques Baudot (United Nations Secretariat)

Vinay K. Bhargava (World Bank)

Pieter Bottelier (World Bank)

Romulo V. Garcia (UNDP)

Dharam Ghai (UNRISD)

He Jin (UNDP)

Arthur N. Holcombe (UNDP)

Gloria Kan (United Nations Secretariat)

Amy C. Munthe-Kaas (UNICEF)

Fainula Kurji-Rodriguez (UNDP)

Ajmal M. Qureshi (FAO)

A. Twigger (ILO)

Felicidad Lema Villareal (FAO)

Host Government

Li Lanqing (Vice-Premier)

Chen Jinhua (State Planning Commission)

Hao Jianxiu (State Planning Commission)

Wang Guangya (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Yang Qingwei (State Planning Commission, Department of Social Development)